

The Kind of Thinking That Can Change Lives

The special supplement in this issue of *Public Health Reports*, beginning on page 497, should be of particular interest to all health educators and health care providers because it represents the imaginative and quality thinking of students in the health professions about new initiatives to promote health and prevent disease.

The supplement contains the papers that captured the three top prizes in the first annual competition for the Secretary's Award for Innovations in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, as well as abstracts of papers that received honorable mention. There are 21 young men and women whose creativeness and caring have been singled out for special recognition. I commend them and congratulate them and all the students who brought their best efforts to the competition.

You may be interested in knowing how this project got started. About 2 years ago, Janet Seay, a health education student at Temple University, wrote a letter to my Department suggesting an annual competition for health professions students which would reward the most innovative proposals for projects to promote health and prevent disease. Her idea was received enthusiastically, and the competition was announced last spring. The Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions helped us publicize the competition to health professions schools all over the country.

One hundred seventeen schools, representing a gratifyingly broad spectrum of health disciplines, selected their best student papers as entries in the competition. From these papers, a panel of experts appointed by the Federation selected 17 entries (from 8 schools of medicine, 4 schools of public health, 3 schools of nursing, 1 school of pharmacy, and 1 school of allied health) as semifinalists. The 17 papers then went to a panel of high-ranking Department of Health and Human Services officials, headed by the Assistant Secretary for Health, who selected the three top prize winners whose interests ranged from smoking cessation to child safety and a junior high school curriculum for fitness. The papers were judged for their innovativeness, the feasibility

of the ideas presented, and the potential impact of these ideas on communities or special populations.

By applying what we learn about healthful practices we can improve our own well-being.

The imaginative proposals of the young people who participated in our first competition represent the kind of thinking that can *and will* change lives. I look forward to equally challenging and inventive proposals from the students who will compete this year and in the years to come.

Margaret M. Heckler
Secretary of Health and Human Services